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Investigating the Potential for Collaboration Between Translators and Filmmakers in the Subtitling of Foreign Films: A Qualitative Exploration of Views

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Abstract

Collaboration between filmmakers and subtitlers should result in subtitles that better reflect filmmakers' intentions. However, these parties rarely communicate in practice, and not enough research has been conducted to investigate attitudes towards collaboration among both parties. Interviews were conducted with 12 professional subtitlers and eight filmmakers to investigate attitudes to and prior experience of collaborating on subtitles. Attitudes varied between parties. Filmmakers were generally enthusiastic about past collaborations, whereas subtitlers' opinions were mixed. Some subtitlers noted collaboration helped understand filmmakers' intent for dialogue. Conversely, others reported input from filmmakers could be overbearing and unhelpful. Some subtitlers doubted filmmakers would be interested in subtitling, despite filmmakers' largely positive attitudes to collaboration. Both groups expressed concerns about time and monetary costs. Interviewees also indicated concerns about when, in the filmmaking process, collaboration would be most useful, with some disputing the practicality of Romero-Fresco's (2019) accessible filmmaking model, which includes collaboration from pre-production to post-production. Both parties viewed subtitling as a creative process, which might be facilitated by collaboration, depending on the product being subtitled. Given subtitlers' higher scepticism towards collaboration, it is likely that an acceptable collaborative model would be subtitler-initiated and limited to post-production, although further research is required.

Key words: accessible filmmaking (AFM), collaboration, filmmakers, subtitles.

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1. Introduction

Filmmaking is collaborative, often involving cooperation between many people with diverse roles and perspectives. Each contributor to the film needs to share a vision. For example, the film museum at Melbourne's Australian Centre for the Moving Image highlights the costume designer's contribution to a film's construction:

> Costume design isn't just about the clothes. Before the first stitch is sewn, costume designers analyse the script and then collaborate with directors and actors to tailor the character, helping to weave together the personality, story and setting in a seamless on-screen performance.[1]

The subtitlers' contribution is, arguably, at least as fundamental to the foreign audience's understanding of both characters and story. Nonetheless, translation has been described as "an afterthought in the filmmaking process" (Romero-Fresco, 2013, p. 209) with Fozooni (2006) provocatively contending that translators are "relegated to a sub-species below the tea assistant in the filmmaking hierarchy" (p. 294).

Effective, targeted collaboration between subtitlers and filmmakers is likely to enable the creation of subtitles that better reflect filmmaker intentions (Romero-Fresco, 2019). In wider translation studies, fidelity to source text (ST) author intentions has long been stressed as important (e.g., Nord, 1992; Holz-Mänttäri, 1984, as cited in Pym, 2014). Emphasis on "author" intentions was extended to audiovisual translation (AVT) by Desilla (2014). She prioritised filmmakers' "preferred interpretations" when judging audience comprehension of implicit meaning in dialogue. However, in practice, communication between subtitlers and filmmakers is uncommon (Fascioli-Álvarez, 2022; Romero-Fresco, 2019) and this is likely to be especially true in the case of large-budget productions or when the subtitler is contracted through an intermediary language service provider. Often, the interpretation of a film's meaning and subsequent subtitling decisions are left to the translator.

Without creator oversight, it may be difficult for subtitlers to create a translation truly reflective of filmmakers' intentions but, on the other hand, involving filmmakers in translation may reduce subtitler agency and extend completion time. In short, in subtitling, are "two heads better than one" or do "too many cooks spoil the broth"? Research has yet to sufficiently explore subtitlers' and filmmakers' perceptions about the value of collaboration or the willingness to collaborate.

1.1. The Value of Collaboration

It has long been contended in organisational psychology that collaboration can improve outcomes in a variety of tasks. However, the extent of improvement is dependent on the collaborative

[1] Viewed 21 February 2021, Federation Square, Melbourne, Victoria.

arrangement and the efforts of those involved. Hackman (1987) explained that effective collaboration should result in output that exceeds the performance standards that team members would individually achieve, enhance the capability for members to work together on future tasks, and facilitate work satisfaction.

Social psychology research further suggests that diversity among team members can increase creativity and innovation (Men et al., 2017). Moreover, cognitive diversity has been described as an "important determinant of the degree to which a team stands to benefit from knowledge sharing" (Men et al., 2017, p. 15), which, in turn, is positively related to creativity. Leung et al. (2020) also discussed the complementary value of collaboration between people from culturally diverse backgrounds to creativity.

The above suggests that knowledge-sharing between filmmakers and subtitlers should enhance decision-making and creativity during translation. Translators and those who create materials to be translated (e.g., screenwriters, directors), have different goals, disciplinary backgrounds and life experiences and start with a different knowledge base. These differences likely impact both translation preferences and interpretations of the translated films. Determining which stakeholders within filmmaking to involve in the production and oversight of subtitles is a necessary first step to assessing possibilities for collaboration.

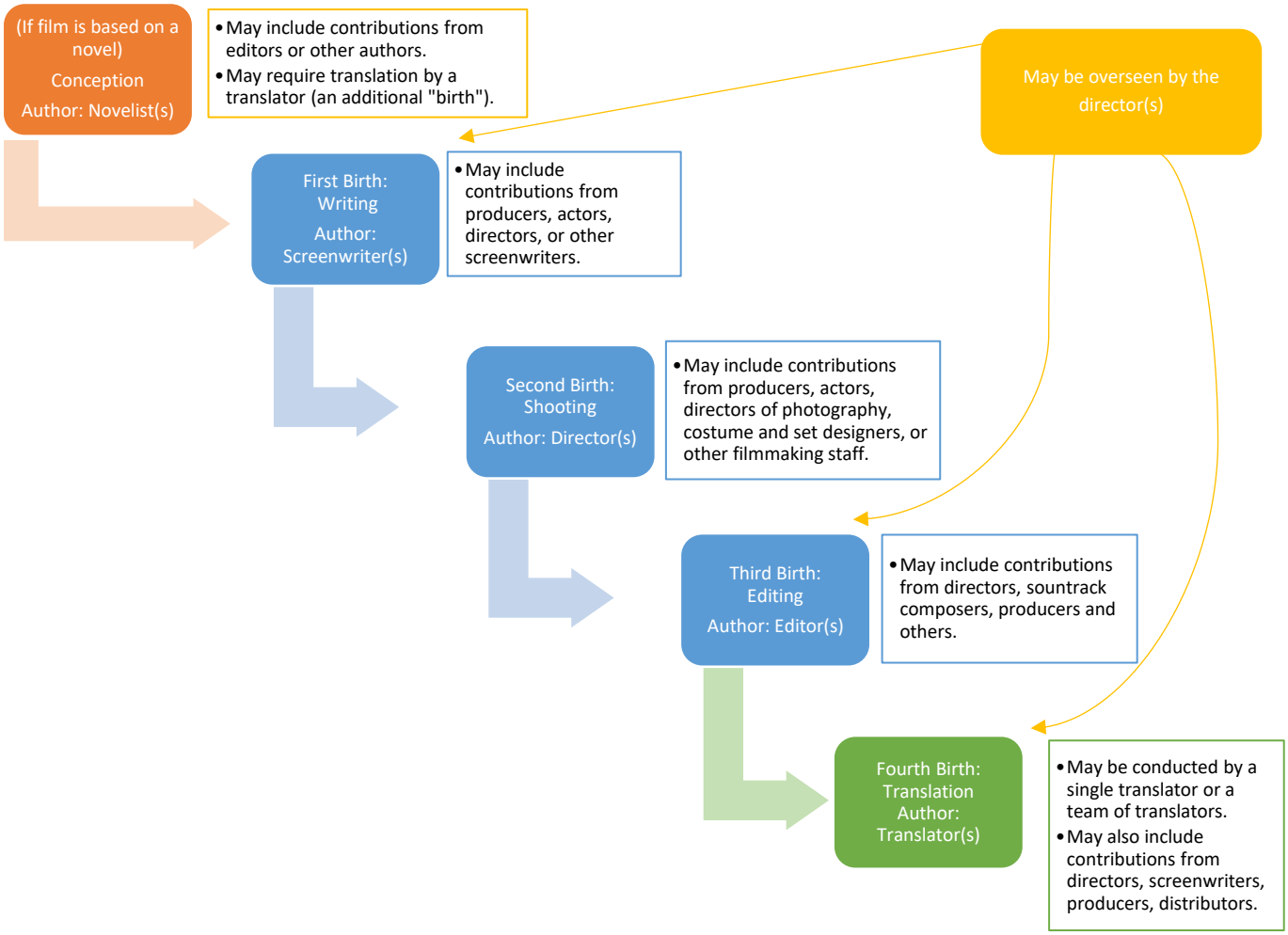
1.2. Who Participates in the "Creation" and "Recreation" of a Film?

The debate about authorship and its importance in critical analysis has been a staple in art and literature discussions for decades. However, film authorship is more difficult to define than the authorship of a novel because many more people are typically involved in creation. *Auteur theory* positions the director as the primary author (Sarris, 1963), but, like authorship in literature, this has been subject to much debate. A quote commonly attributed to French director Robert Bresson states that "a film is born three times – in the writing of the script, in the shooting and in the editing" (paraphrased by Ondaatje & Murch, 2002, p. xix). Ondaatje and Murch further suggested that a film based on a book is born four times, with different authors overseeing the project, often with input from others, like producers.

Zeller (2000) described translation as "a work of art emanating from another author's context and brought into the readers' universe by its other author, the translator" (p. 139), suggesting that a translated film is born once again with an additional author (or multiple authors if translated by a team). Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the different *births* that a film goes through and the contributors at each step, based on the above comments by Ondaatje and Murch (2002) and Zeller (2000).

Figure 1.

The Many "Births" of a Film



Source: Author's own elaboration

The key role of the director is to oversee the project and mediate cooperation between collaborators. In discussions of collaboration in subtitling literature, it is usually directors, rather than screenwriters or actors, who interact with translators (Romero-Fresco, 2019; Sanz Ortega, 2015), even though other parties could provide unique perspectives on translation priorities.

Although the director often has the ultimate authority, there are numerous anecdotes about how producers' demands or editing changes have resulted in a product not reflecting the director's vision. In these cases, *director's cuts* are sometimes released, often as a marketing strategy to sell home-media releases of films, indicating that the director's vision is viewed as inherently valuable.

In summary, ascribing responsibility for who decides how a film is presented is difficult. This dilemma extends to translation and is exacerbated when filmmakers are unfamiliar with the target language. Nonetheless, the director is often considered the project's overseer. Explaining the director's vision to the translator may therefore help provide foreign audiences with an experience closer to that intended by the filmmaking team. A collaborative approach to subtitling is likely to benefit filmmakers, translators, and audiences.

1.3. Collaboration Between Subtitlers and Filmmakers – Could Teamwork Make the Dream Work?

In translation studies, Holz-Mänttäri (1984, as cited in Pym, 2014) characterised the translator as an expert in solving translation-related problems. ST authors and clients were also characterised as experts in the desired effect of a text. Thus, ST authors and translators have complementary expertise, and therefore, collaboration may increase the quality of the resulting product (Men et al., 2017). Approaches to collaboration between these groups range from general recommendations provided as a briefing by the ST author, to directly working together throughout the translation (Hersant, 2016; Letawe, 2016; Zienowicz-Wielebska & Krukowska-Burke, 2020).

Empirical research on literary translation has explored the perceived benefits of collaboration between ST authors and translators. Jansen (2019) surveyed literary translators about their opinions on collaboration with ST authors. Approximately 60% of a sample of 190 participants reported usually or sometimes interacting with ST authors when translating. Jansen concluded that "communication focuses predominantly on clarifying the content of the source text…, less on how this content should be read, and even less on how the content should be rendered in the target text" (p. 678). Almost all participants welcomed communication with ST authors, with 65% describing this as very useful and a further 33% describing it as useful to a certain degree. Additionally, most participants (82%) definitely or mainly agreed that ST authors' suggestions about content improved confidence about translation choices. Conversely, among participants who had no or very little contact with ST authors (around 40% of total participants), 70% did not feel the need for such contact. Almost all participants (90%) did not want collaboration to reduce their individual freedom to make decisions. In summary, translators generally favour collaboration, but for some, the cost of communication might exceed the benefits. However, the empirical assessment of these matters is limited, particularly for subtitling.

Among the limited research is a survey of six French subtitlers by Silvester (2021). Interviewees indicated collaboration with directors was beneficial, although the number expressing this opinion was not provided, and the sample was too small to be generalisable. Most other insights in the literature about subtitling collaboration are anecdotal, provided from filmmakers' perspectives.

Some directors oversee the translation of their films or collaborate directly with translators, usually in the translation of auteur cinema (Eisenschitz, 2013). However, even when directors seek

involvement, their instructions are not necessarily followed. For example, both Quentin Tarantino (Sanz Ortega, 2015) and Claire Denis (2004) reported providing guidance for film translations that was ignored because it was inconsistent with distributors' requests.

In cases where filmmaker input into translation does occur, it can be both beneficial and constraining for the subtitler. For literary translation, Vanderschelden (1998) argued that ST author involvement may undermine translator agency, shifting the decision-making power away from the translator. This is likely to occur for subtitling because filmmakers are likely unfamiliar with the target language and culture. Thus, giving them power over translation may result in subtitles unsuited to target audiences.

An example encapsulating both potential benefits and costs for collaboration is that of Stanley Kubrick's involvement in the translations of his films. Famously, Kubrick was very concerned with translation quality, stating that the translation of film is "an intrinsic part of the artistic side of the production" (quoted in Zanotti, 2018, p. 209). To assess whether the translations met his standard, he would have subtitles and dubs back-translated into English so he could assess whether the plot and characterisation had been "appropriately" conveyed. He believed it necessary to provide extensive guidance, both prior to and during translation, to retain the nuance of dialogue and avoid recurring mistakes. Zanotti provided examples of Kubrick's instructions for translating his 1964 film Dr. Strangelove:

> It is very important to find the equivalent words in your country for the nouveau vocabulary of deterrence, i.e., "pre-empt", "modest" and "acceptable civilian casualties", "Doomsday device", "megadeaths". In English, these words obviously are euphemistic attempts at making their content seem less terrifying, and fitting in somehow within the vocabulary of economists, military men, etc…
> Major Kong, the pilot of the Bomber is Texan. His accent and his vocabulary are colorful in a rustic way. He should not be translated or dubbed as being foolish or stupid, but simply in some equivalently humorous rustic accent. (p. 211–212)

However, his instructions contain a challenging level of ambiguity, and understanding of what constitutes a "rustic accent" or "colourful vocabulary" is likely to differ between translators. Additionally, this approach could be perceived as removing control from translators. Nonetheless, these kinds of notes could potentially help in selecting vocabulary that best conveys Kubrick's vision for the film's narrative, tone and characters.

Famously, Kubrick was displeased with the first Japanese translation of his *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), after having the subtitles back-translated into English and finding that the creative and frequent use of profanity in his English dialogue was absent from the subtitles (Nornes, 2007). The highly respected translator responsible, Natsuko Toda, reportedly expressed the opinion that swearing is difficult to translate into Japanese because "we don't have swear words in Japan" (Nornes, 2007, p. 216). Kubrick replaced Toda with Japanese filmmaker Masato Harada, with whom he "poured over the script" (p. 217) to achieve his desired translation. Nornes speaks positively of Harada's translation, and Kubrick was seemingly more pleased with Harada's version, suggesting that collaboration can achieve a final product that better represents the filmmaker's vision. However, this instance can also

be viewed as an example of director involvement creating a potentially dysfunctional dynamic, stripping the translator of autonomy. For some, this may be seen as a threat to their professional status, and based on the results of Jansen's (2019) aforementioned survey, it is a dynamic to which many translators may object. If collaboration is to be achieved, it is important to establish a cooperative relationship that is favourable and respectful for both parties.

1.4. The Accessible Filmmaking Model: A New Approach to Collaboration

A model intended to support effective collaboration between filmmakers and translators has recently been described by Romero-Fresco (2019). His *accessible filmmaking* (AFM) model aims to "[integrate] translation and accessibility into the filmmaking process through collaboration between filmmakers and translators" (p. 8). This model proposes that, in the case of smaller productions, filmmakers cooperate directly with translators and/or media accessibility professionals. In larger productions, where the film is for wide release, filmmakers should cooperate with a *director of accessibility and translation* (DAT), who manages translated versions of the film, assuring quality control, liaising between various stakeholders in filmmaking and translation processes, and producing instructional materials for translators. Under the AFM model, filmmakers, accessibility professionals, translators and/or DATs work together during a film's pre-production, production, and post-production, considering both inter- and intra-lingual translations. For example, when editing a film, it may be beneficial to consider the period for which shots are displayed, to allow audiences time to read subtitles. Shots could be framed to ensure subtitles will not blend into colours displayed and will not overlap with on-screen text or patterns that could reduce readability.

Within AFM, filmmakers cooperate in the translation process by providing instructions about how subtitles are written and displayed. Like in literary translation, communication between parties involved in the creation of accessible materials can range from the minimal provision of instructions to direct collaboration throughout the filmmaking and translation processes (Fascioli-Álvarez, 2022). One of the functions of AFM is to allow "filmmakers to regain full control of how their films are received" (Romero-Fresco, 2019, p. 25). The AFM model also aims to educate filmmakers about translation constraints and gives translators more power to influence the creation of films that can more easily be translated. Participation in the filmmaking process may also allow translators to cooperate with other creatives, like actors and writers, who could provide further insights into the nuances of dialogue.

Romero-Fresco (2019) estimated that a minimal application of the model (i.e., collaboration between translators/accessibility experts and filmmakers with at least one meeting) would scarcely cost more than standard translation services. He suggested that even more extensive implementation (e.g., DAT participation during pre-production, use of creative subtitles, provision of audio introduction) would only amount to 0.1% of the cost of a low-budget film, or 0.01% of a major studio film. He argued he had "yet to meet a filmmaker who, after hearing the case for AFM, has not got on board with it"

(p. 221). However, to date, there have been no investigations of filmmaker or translator opinions about the feasibility of Romero-Fresco's AFM model for interlingual subtitling, and as highlighted earlier, research on attitudes towards filmmaker-subtitler collaboration is limited. Both questions are explored in the current paper.

Understanding how filmmakers and subtitlers view their roles in translation and the potential for collaboration is critical to improving subtitle standards. This article compares opinions about the potential value of collaboration, with the goal of providing insight into the feasibility and acceptability of a collaborative approach.

2. Research Questions

RQ1: What do participants view as the potential benefits and costs of collaboration between subtitlers and filmmakers?

RQ2: What do participants think about Romero-Fresco's (2019) AFM model? Are there other collaborative approaches they would prefer?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Participants were recruited by email using snowball sampling and were provided an explanatory statement. Informed consent was recorded prior to beginning interviews. Three of the 20 participants (12 subtitlers, 8 directors) knew the interviewer prior to recruitment. The study was approved by Monash University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Project ID: 26382). Research was conducted in accordance with Tong et al.'s (2007) *Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ)* checklist.

All interviewees spoke either English or Japanese, and the interviews were conducted in these languages. Age was not sought, but all were adults employed in filmmaking or AVT. Participants formed two groups: professional subtitlers and filmmakers.

3.1.1. Description of Subtitlers

Professional subtitlers were defined as anyone who had completed paid work translating film dialogue interlingually for the purpose of creating subtitles for a legal release of a film by its rights holders or distributors. They had worked for between 10 and 40 years. All had subtitled feature films, and some had translated other audiovisual materials, including TV series, documentaries, short films,

trailers, DVD extras and instructional videos. Ten had experience translating from another language into English. These included Japanese (8), Chinese (1) and German (1). Seven had translated from English into another language: Japanese (4), Chinese (1), French (1) and German (1).

3.1.2. Description of Filmmakers

Filmmakers included anyone who had participated in making a film (short or feature length) in at least one of the following roles: director, screenwriter, or producer. Participants also reported experience in other roles (see Table 1). All filmmakers lived in Australia (four) or Japan (four). Length of involvement in filmmaking varied from 10 to "more than 30 years".

Table 1.

Roles Reported by Filmmakers

Role	Type of film	Number of participants
Director	Feature-length fiction	4
	Feature-length documentaries	1
	Short-length fiction	4
	Short-length documentaries	1
	Television shows (genre not specified)	1
Screenwriter	Feature-length fiction	5
	Short-length fiction	4
	Television shows (genre not specified)	1
Script doctoring	Fiction (length not specified)	3
Producer	Feature-length fiction	5
	Television shows (genre not specified)	2
Distribution (DVD/Blu-ray production and sales)	Feature-length fiction	1
Editor	Feature- and short-length Documentaries	1
Other (casting, lighting, creation of DVD extras)	Not specified	2

Source: Author's own elaboration

No filmmakers reported working on large-budget films. Instead, they had primarily worked on arthouse and/or independent films. Most stated that they targeted an international audience, with some explaining that they made specific choices to appeal to international viewers, like avoiding references that were too culturally specific or, where necessary, creating alternative international edits.

3.2. Procedure

Interviews were conducted one-on-one via Zoom (*n*=18) or telephone (*n*=2). Subtitlers and filmmakers were asked if they had experience collaborating in subtitling. Those who had (*n*=13), described experiences and assessed whether collaboration was beneficial. All the participants were asked their general opinions on collaboration. They were also given a brief description of Romero-Fresco's (2019) AFM model (consistent with that provided herein) and asked their thoughts on the viability and utility of AFM. Most were unfamiliar with AFM, and judgements were made at face value, based on the interviewer's description.

Interview topics were open-ended to encourage conversation and facilitate rapport building. Following Saldanha and O'Brien (2014), new topics were introduced during the interview, based on interviewees' responses. This enabled the investigation of fixed topics across a series of interviews, while simultaneously allowing interviewees to provide unique insights.

3.3. Data Analysis

All the interviews (duration about 60 minutes) were recorded with consent. The recordings were converted to text using Trint transcription software. The transcripts were checked for accuracy by comparing the text to the original recording and revised where errors were found. The analysis involved the "conventional [qualitative] content analysis" approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279). This uses inductive coding following data familiarisation, providing direct information from participants without imposing preconceived theoretical perspectives.

The analysis involved the following. First, the checked transcripts were re-read, and text sections judged relevant to the research questions were highlighted. After processing three subtitlers' transcripts, preliminary codes were identified and used to construct a table in Microsoft Word. The remaining transcripts were then coded (and the original three re-coded) using these preliminary codes and adding new ones as needed. The same process was repeated with filmmakers' transcripts.

Among subtitlers, the aim was to continue interviewing participants until data saturation was reached, defined as the point at which no new concepts emerged. By the commencement of the tenth subtitler interview, no new perspectives were encountered, and an adequate representation of content was therefore assumed; however, all interviews were coded, consistent with the approach of other qualitative researchers (e.g., Munday et al., 2009). Filmmakers interviewed (*n*=8) were

limited to those available to the researcher. Nonetheless, data saturation was achieved by the eighth interview, and the length of interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of the primary questions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. How Common is Collaboration Between Subtitlers and Filmmakers?

4.1.1. Subtitlers

Eight of the 12 subtitlers had collaborated with a director at least once. One found it so unpleasant that he never did it again. One who had not experienced collaboration indicated that she would like the opportunity to do so. None reported working with screenwriters, except where the screenwriter was also the director. This provides further evidence to suggest that even though screenwriters and actors can offer valuable insight into the meaning of a film, directors are often ascribed "authorship", and, therefore, creative decision-making power. Consistent with descriptions in prior literature (Romero-Fresco, 2019), subtitlers who had collaborated with filmmakers reported that collaboration only happened occasionally. Collaboration was achieved via in-person meetings and email correspondence.

The frequency of collaboration may differ between languages and regions, although the sample size was too small to generalise. All six subtitlers living in Japan and translating from Japanese to English reported having worked with directors (and, in some cases, also producers at the same time). However, the one subtitler living in Japan and exclusively translating in the opposite direction (English to Japanese) had not collaborated with filmmakers before. Furthermore, outside Japan, collaboration with filmmakers was rare, with only two of the five subtitlers reporting collaborative experiences (both living in Australia and translating bi-directionally, one English–Chinese, the other English–German). These results suggest directors might be most interested in collaboration when they live near the subtitler, despite modern technological advancements allowing for easy online communication.

4.1.2. Filmmakers

Five of the eight filmmakers had collaborated with translators at least once. One had never had a film translated but indicated that he would like to be involved in subtitling his future projects.

Filmmaker 1[2], who speaks Japanese and English and primarily works as a distributor and producer, explained that in some instances, he participated in the translation of the films that he distributes. In all other cases, filmmakers only collaborated in the subtitling of films they had directed.

4.2. The Impact of Cooperation During Subtitling

4.2.1. Subtitlers

Overall, subtitlers' opinions were divided about whether collaboration was beneficial. Some (three out of 12) reported that working with directors was more valuable than working with producers or distributors. One reported an instance where producers provided instructions that were later contradicted by the director. This suggested a preference for limiting collaborative contact to just one member of the filmmaking team. In practice, this role could be filled by the DAT (Romero-Fresco, 2019).

Several subtitlers (four out of 12) highlighted the advantages of collaborating with filmmakers. For example, Subtitler 10 reported that questioning the director aided decision-making, particularly when rapport was already established. Subtitler 4 further explained that collaboration with filmmakers encouraged a better understanding of the intended meaning and function of dialogue. One director encouraged him to remove lines of background dialogue from the subtitles because they distracted from aspects of the image that the director deemed more important.

Three translators suggested that the value of collaboration depended on the film. Specifically, films with a dialogue focus, or films incorporating several spoken languages might benefit more from translator-filmmaker collaboration. Conversely, Subtitler 4 argued that working with directors was helpful, even when a film lacked nuanced dialogue, because directors can provide insight into whether certain elements of dialogue should be translated.

Some subtitlers (four of 12) provided anecdotes about negative collaborative experiences. Even Subtitler 4, who valued working with directors, acknowledged that "having the filmmaker there is not always a good thing", noting collaboration was time-consuming and reaped no additional pay – complaints echoed by other subtitlers. Three suggested that directors can be too obsessional, "[going] over every single sentence with a fine-tooth comb" (Subtitler 2), and highlighted that directors are often unfamiliar with the target language or culture, limiting the value of their input. These instances reflect a failure to achieve effective collaboration as defined by Hackman (1987): the productive output is not judged by subtitlers to exceed the standard that they could produce alone;

[2] Participant numbers reflect order of recruitment.

the group experience frustrates rather than satisfies; and, in one case, the negative experience resulted in the subtitler refusing to engage in future collaboration.

A lack of filmmaker interest was another perceived factor limiting the potential for collaboration. Many subtitlers (eight of 12) indicated that filmmakers are often disinterested in translation and that subtitling is considered an "afterthought" in filmmaking and distribution. Two subtitlers suggested that subtitling is "too mundane" for directors to deal with, and that some filmmakers view involvement in subtitling as "beneath them".

When working without filmmaker contact, subtitlers had mixed opinions about the "accuracy" of their work to filmmakers' intentions. Two suggested their subtitles were "as objective as possible".

> They entirely come from the script, without a doubt. They come from the kind of story being told. I'm never off. I might be off-piste, but I'm still going down the same hill.... [My subtitles are] very highly reflective [of the filmmakers' intentions]. (Subtitler 8)

Subtitler 12 suggested that although her subtitles are based on her own interpretation of the film, they must be at least representative of the vision of her client, otherwise, they would not be accepted. It should, however, be noted that even though a client approves a film's subtitles, this does not guarantee that anyone directly involved in writing or directing the film is involved in approval because the client for subtitling is often a member of a production or distribution company rather than a member of the filmmaking team.

Other translators (six of the 12) suggested that their subtitles largely reflected their subjective interpretation of a film:

> Characters become my own. I give them the voice I want.... I'm not changing anything, so I at least would like to think that I'm remaining faithful to what's being said. But yes, there's a lot of projecting happening. (Subtitler 6)

These subtitlers did, however, stress that although the translation is based on their interpretation of a film's dialogue, the images and performances of the actors remain unchanged and therefore, the viewing experience should not differ too greatly from the original.

4.2.2. Filmmakers

Unlike subtitlers, whose opinions were mixed, the five filmmakers who had experienced collaboration with subtitlers were all positive about the impact on the final product. Both filmmakers and translators described subtitling as a "creative" or "artistic" process. This perception provided motivation for filmmakers to participate in the translation of their films. For example, Filmmaker 4 stated that the subtitled version of a film "will be different [from the original], but will be more resonant [with the target audience]". She explained that she felt it necessary to be involved in the

translation process, stating, "you can't just send your baby off to somebody who's going to put all the bells and whistles on it because they've got no idea." This was mirrored by Filmmaker 8:

> Everything on the screen is there for a reason. Why shouldn't subtitles be a part of that? If people are seeing it, you should have a say in how it's going to look. It'd be silly not to want to care about something that's going to be on the screen if you care so much about every other minor detail.

Similarly, Filmmaker 6 stated that he found it "horrific" that subtitlers would not be able to ask the director questions and instead rely entirely on their own judgement. He categorised choices regarding replication of sociolects or unique speech styles in subtitles as "artistic decision[s]" and indicated that these should only be made with director oversight.

Outside of translation, most filmmakers (six of eight) described a collaborative approach to writing dialogue, usually involving input from actors. Filmmakers are accustomed to cooperating with other parties during the creative process and, in many cases, see it as beneficial. Some (two out of eight) even reported writing the screenplay for their films in a different language than it was to be performed in, and then having it translated. It is, therefore, likely that filmmakers are already accustomed to collaborating with other creatives. This may partially explain their comparative enthusiasm for collaboration, as opposed to subtitlers, who may be more accustomed to working alone or with others in the same field.

Although all filmmakers experienced in collaboration with subtitlers found it beneficial, two who had not experienced it questioned the practicality. Specifically, interviewees suggested that collaboration might be too time-consuming, particularly when a film is to be translated into multiple languages.

> [Subtitling] generally happens so far down the track once you've got a distributor and you've sold the film. It would be nice [to work with translators]…. But generally, you've moved on to another project or another two projects by the time that happens and sometimes the time is not there... (Filmmaker 7)

Even in instances where filmmakers want to collaborate, they are sometimes unable to because production and distribution companies exclude them. For example, Filmmaker 5's films had been subtitled into another language without him being informed. He explained that the film industry prioritises a quick turn-around and that producers and distributors may see involving directors in subtitling as too troublesome or time-consuming.

Filmmaker 1 suggested that the extent to which collaboration is beneficial depends on "the case of the director and… the translator". The respective outlooks and values of the two parties and the nature of their collaborative relationship are likely to affect outcomes.

The success or failure of collaboration is likely influenced by the distribution of decision-making power among the two parties. Translators in Jansen's (2019) survey almost unanimously expressed dissatisfaction with collaboration that reduced decision-making freedom. It is, therefore essential to

achieve a collaborative approach whereby the filmmaker provides the translator with information that aids rather than constrains decision-making.

Two film directors described a collaborative relationship initiated by the subtitler emailing filmmakers with questions about the purpose of the dialogue.

> [The subtitler] came back with a few questions and there was a kind of email back and forth.... But that was more me clearing up what exactly was meant by a line and not me in any way trying to impose on her what should be done. (Filmmaker 2)

Filmmaker 5 provided the following explanation about the content of the questions asked by subtitlers:

> They kept double checking, like, if they needed to paraphrase something or if they needed to slightly change a line, if that would be OK…. Sometimes, she's trying to work out the subtext of a line.

In contrast to the subtitler-initiated dynamic described above, Filmmaker 6 referred to himself as a "control freak about subtitles", describing a director-initiated collaborative relationship that could be described as "micro-managing". If his films are translated into languages with which he is unfamiliar, he provides the subtitler with a "list of directives on character points, or plot points or things [he wants] to make sure are retained within the translation". Without providing such instructions, the filmmaker believed that the film could be interpreted in a way inconsistent with his vision, a concern shared by other filmmakers. When working with languages he speaks (English and Japanese), Filmmaker 6 explained that he "debates pretty much every single [subtitle]" with the translator. This process is conducted primarily via email using an Excel spreadsheet with the subtitles for each line in one column and comments from the filmmaker and translator in other columns. Filmmaker 6 acknowledged that this approach is more demanding on the subtitler than a "typical job", but explained that he has had "the luxury of working with other artists who care about what we're doing". He then described a frequent collaborator as an extension of himself, stating that "she's my voice in Japanese". In this regard, his collaborative approach can be seen as an extension of the director's role in overseeing a film and making key decisions about its contents, with little autonomy provided to the subtitler. This filmmaker-initiated approach is likely to be unappealing to many translators (Jansen, 2019). However, it may still be viable where the filmmaker and subtitler have an established working relationship, and when the filmmaker understands the ways in which languages and cultures can differ.

Lastly, Filmmaker 4 described an approach that struck a more equal power balance. Both parties read the dialogue in the film together, with the filmmaker explaining the intended meaning and function. However, ultimate decision-making power was given to the subtitler because of the filmmaker's self-acknowledged lack of expertise in the target language and culture. Like Filmmaker 6's approach, Filmmaker 4's approach was more time-consuming than subtitling without collaboration. However,

this added emphasis on collaboration during the translation process was reflective of Filmmaker 4's view that subtitling is "another whole creative process".

Ultimately, the best collaborative relationship likely differs on a film-by-film basis and depends on the parties involved. Nonetheless, in most cases, a subtitler-initiated approach like that described by Filmmakers 2 and 5 is likely to be the most widely accepted by translators because it allows them to maintain creative freedom and does not substantially increase the required time. This approach is also likely to be widely accepted by filmmakers, who, as a group, reported satisfaction with all collaborative approaches and would likely appreciate the relatively short time investment. However, the trade-off for the convenience of this approach is that it does not facilitate the even power balance and thoroughness required by approaches advocated by Filmmaker 6 or Romero-Fresco's (2019) AFM model.

4.3. Attitudes to the Accessible Filmmaking Model

Both groups had mixed opinions about AFM. It was widely acknowledged that accessibility is an important issue. However, although some interviewees were enthusiastic about the prospect of implementing the model, others questioned its viability.

4.3.1. Subtitlers

Among the subtitlers, half expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity to influence film production. Three of the 12 suggested that working closely with directors in pre-production and production would improve the final product, given the ability to foresee and correct potential problems before they emerge.

> It sounds like utopia to me. Just the amount of times where there is dialogue layered with narration, layered with on-screen text, or because of the shot composition, the placement of the subtitles can't be in the middle – it has to be shifted... Having someone who would steer the filmmakers into making a film more subtitle-able would be fantastic. (Subtitler 4)

On the other hand, some translators (three out of 12) indicated that AFM would be akin to having "too many cooks in the kitchen" and that it could decrease the director's ability to achieve their vision. Several (five out of 12) doubted that filmmakers would accept such a process. Subtitler 11 stated that AFM "kind of sounds like adding another layer of bureaucracy".

Even among the subtitlers who were enthusiastic, the real-world practicality of AFM was questioned. One pointed out that subtitling norms differ between languages (e.g., some display subtitles vertically rather than horizontally), making it impossible to account for all languages in pre-production and production. Furthermore, since some films may be translated into dozens of languages, collaboration

in subtitling for each language might be impractical. Other subtitlers (two of 12) raised concerns about time and money.

4.3.2. Filmmakers

Like subtitlers, the filmmakers had mixed opinions about AFM. Some (three out of eight) were enthusiastic about the model, with Filmmaker 2 expressing interest in including a DAT in the filmmaking process, and calling it a "fascinating idea". Filmmaker 4, who previously described the bi-directional collaborative process through which she and a subtitler translated one of her films together, also expressed a willingness to incorporate the AFM model into her filmmaking. She stated that she "(…) [loves] having any input like that", but acknowledged that AFM may lengthen production and therefore be impractical.

Some filmmakers (three out of eight) suggested that subtitles would be better addressed in post-production. Subtitler participation in pre-production and production was seen by some as potentially costly, time-consuming, distracting and obstructive to the creative process.

> You can't whisper in the Steadicam operator's ear, "besides the thousand other things you're trying to adjust for the shot, can you also leave some room at the bottom and on the right-hand side for the subtitles in Korean?" … You're just going to get punched. (Filmmaker 5)

Overall, potential issues with AFM identified by interviewees were consistent with the three reservations Romero-Fresco (2019) identified as being held by AFM sceptics: time, money and filmmaker interest. Moreover, the fear that AFM will compromise the artistic licence is consistent with concerns about accessibility practices previously identified by Fascioli-Álvarez (2022) following the interviews with filmmakers. It is possible that a more thorough description of AFM may have impacted perceptions of usefulness and practicality.

AFM may prove beneficial to achieving collaboration between filmmakers and translators, but its success likely depends upon whether it is feasible to implement efficiently and whether both groups are willing to participate. However, responses provided by interviewees suggest that some filmmakers and subtitlers are sceptical about the feasibility of the model. If AFM is to become widely used, easily accessible supporting materials will be necessary to introduce the concept and address common concerns. In some instances, even when informed of the benefits of AFM, stakeholders may judge it impractical to establish direct contact between filmmakers and translators. The development of alternative approaches that achieve some form of collaboration, even if significantly reduced in scope, may be more practical.

4.4. Limitations of This Study

This research is intended only as a starting point for investigating the potential for collaboration. The results reflect the views of a small sample and should not be generalised to represent the views of all professionals working in these fields, although they have highlighted attitudes and concerns that should be examined further.

Among the subtitlers, eight spoke English as a first language. Additionally, eight translated between Japanese and English. Similarly, all the filmmakers lived in either Japan or Australia and spoke English as their first language. It is possible that attitudes to collaboration differ based on the filmmaking environments in the participants' countries of residence and the languages spoken. Future research should survey opinions and experiences of collaboration among a larger, more diverse population.

Another sample limitation is that the filmmakers interviewed were solely involved in relatively low-budget productions. Filmmakers involved in more commercial filmmaking could have different views on the value of collaboration.

Finally, it should be noted that in many cases, translators are asked to create new subtitles for old films, the creators of which may be deceased. The approaches to collaboration discussed herein are thereby limited in utility to the translation of recent films. Although direct collaboration cannot be achieved when filmmakers are deceased, it may be possible for translators to infer information about filmmakers' intentions based on production documents or other sources. The utility of this approach requires a separate analysis.

5. Conclusions

Participants in both groups described subtitling as an artistic, creative process and many were open to collaborating in translation. Filmmakers were generally enthusiastic, viewing collaboration as an opportunity to preserve their artistic vision. Subtitlers had mixed opinions, some reporting negative experiences with collaborative relationships that were more constraining than beneficial, but others explained that collaboration provided insight into the intended meaning and function of dialogue. These outcomes have highlighted collaboration as a potentially fruitful approach to creating subtitles that meet the goals of both groups.

The extent to which collaboration is beneficial depends on how it is achieved. In some instances, the time investment required from both parties could outweigh the benefits, particularly without additional monetary compensation. Moreover, some directors may lack the inter-cultural understanding necessary to provide subtitlers with useful instruction. When filmmakers have a strong understanding of the target language and culture, they may be able to offer more insight into how dialogue should be translated. However, this may result in them assuming a more controlling role and reducing subtitler autonomy, an outcome to which many translators are opposed. To

achieve effective collaboration, as defined by Hackman (1987), it is important to develop a relationship that satisfies personal needs within both groups.

Both groups were uncertain about the practicality of AFM, citing time and budgetary concerns. Although some subtitlers wished to be more directly involved in filmmaking, others felt that doing so would compromise the director's vision, a fear shared by some filmmakers. Participants in both groups shared the opinion that, if collaboration were to occur, it would best be done once the film is in post-production. It should be acknowledged that in Romero-Fresco's (2019) description of AFM, the degree of collaboration between participants can range greatly depending on how the model is applied. Additionally, AFM covers both accessibility for people with sensory disabilities and interlingual translation. The results of this study suggest that a maximal application of AFM throughout both filmmaking and translation may not be optimal for all instances of interlingual subtitling, but this does not negate the potential for some form of collaboration between these groups, even if in a reduced scope. Additionally, it does not preclude the potential use of the AFM model for the creation of films that are more accessible to audiences with sensory disabilities. It should also be noted that participants in this study had no direct experience with AFM, and their opinions about its potential utility are therefore limited. It is important going forward to investigate the opinions of filmmakers employing AFM in actual practice, to determine the model's usefulness and feasibility.

Subtitlers showed a preference for collaborating with directors rather than producers and preferred to collaborate with just one member of the filmmaking team to avoid receiving contradictory instructions. If a larger group of filmmakers is to collaborate in subtitling, the director of translation (as proposed by Romero-Fresco, 2019) might be able to serve as an intermediary and negotiate a set of instructions reflecting the goals of the larger group.

The optimal model for collaboration likely depends on the film, the participants involved, and the purpose of translation. In most cases, it can be argued that acceptable approaches for effective collaboration would allow subtitlers to maintain professional control over subtitle content, with filmmakers providing supplementary information, as needed, to aid decision-making. This is especially applicable when filmmakers are not versed in the target language or culture.

Future research should continue to explore the values of filmmakers and subtitlers and methods for facilitating communication between them. Specifically, the potential for implementing a subtitler-initiated approach to seeking information from filmmakers, possibly in the form of briefing materials, should be investigated. It is also important to continue investigating communication between subtitlers and other stakeholders, such as distributors and language service providers, given that, in many instances, filmmakers are currently not included in discussions about subtitling, even when they might wish to be.

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